Accountability Report

2015–2016

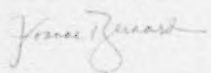
Community Services

NOVA SCOTIA

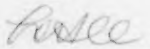
Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Community Services for the year ended March 31, 2016 is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Department of Community Services' Statement of Mandate for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the Department of Community Services outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by Community Services' management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Community Services' management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the Department of Community Services' 2015-2016 Statement of Mandate.



Hon. Joanne Bernard
Minister, Department of Community Services



Lynn Hartwell
Deputy Minister, Department of Community Services

Message from the Minister

I am pleased to present our 2015-16 Accountability Report on behalf of the Department of Community Services, as a summary of the activities of our Department over the last year. The department continues to work on multiple initiatives to support the transformation of our programs. Transformation is about improving how we deliver our programs and services, so that we can better help the people who use them, and help nurture healthy families and communities. We have a lot of work ahead, with an ambitious agenda over the next three years. By then we believe that we will have transformed the major areas of the social services system, which has not seen any significant transformation for many decades.

The Disability Support Program offers supports to children, youth and adults who have intellectual disabilities, long-term mental illness and physical disabilities. The Program's transformation is guided by the *Roadmap for Transforming the Nova Scotia Services to Persons with Disabilities Program*. The work will increase community living by enhancing social and economic inclusion, and will improve programs and services to be flexible and person-centred. A request to introduce Accessibility Legislation was submitted in June 2016, with the hope of introducing it in the Fall of 2016. We also gave many families more control in how they manage their respite supports and funding.

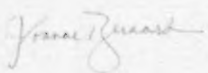
Child, Youth and Family Supports provides programs and services to protect children and youth from harm and to support families when they need it. As part of the transformation process, we expanded the CYFS Parenting Journey program to introduce culturally-specific programs, offering families individualized parenting support, in African, Acadian and Aboriginal Nova Scotian communities. We have started work to formalize prevention and early intervention services that will support families earlier on, including the development of the Families Plus pilot, an intensive family preservation program that offers more practical and clinical support to strengthen families at increased risk. Amendments to the *Children and Family Services Act* were passed in December 2015, with work continuing on the development of regulations and policy in anticipation of proclamation in Fall 2016. There has been considerable work on the Sexual Violence Strategy, including the recent launch of funding grants to engage communities throughout the province in changing how we address sexual violence.

The Employment Support and Income Assistance program provides financial assistance to persons in need of support. The program helps clients move toward employment, independence and self-sufficiency. Clients receiving Income Assistance saw an increase in their monthly personal allowance of $20 this year. We are also implementing changes to improve client access to our caseworkers, and developing a menu of services that will help clients understand what supports and services are available to them.

As we change, we continue to listen. Over the last year, we have engaged with stakeholders and clients across the province to hear their perspective on what transformations would be helpful for our programs and services. Their feedback will help shape our work as we move forward.

The department's main goals are to provide services and supports that allow our clients to have control over their own lives, meet their basic needs, help them join the labour market, and to ensure they are safe from abuse and violence, and make them feel included in their community. This report provides an overview of our activities in 2015-16 that are contributing towards that, including how we measure our success in achieving outcomes for the people we serve. I hope you find this information both interesting and useful.

Regards,



Hon. Joanne Bernard
Minister, Department of Community Services

Introduction

The annual Accountability Report for the Department of Community Services reports on the progress achieved by the Department towards the outcomes and financial targets established in the 2015-2016 Statement of Mandate. The 2015-2016 Statement of Mandate is available on Community Services' website at http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/department/Publications.html.

Accomplishments

The table below describes the Department's accomplishments against the priorities identified in the 2015-2016 Statement of Mandate.

Program Area	Priority	Status	Comments
ESIA	Modernized Benefit System	Work in Progress	ESIA Transformation initiatives continued throughout 2015-2016 including successful client engagement, implementation of various client improvements to reduce the administrative burden and enhance client experience, continued development of client segmentation and intervention model and analysis of income security options.
	Outcome, Evaluation & Monitoring Framework	Work in Progress	Defined departmental and program outcomes, and determined metrics and indicators for both clients and participants and the system as a whole. Began the implementation of reporting on measures.
	Employment Support Alignment with Careers Nova Scotia	Work in Progress	DCS continued to work with Labour and Advanced Education (LAE) to ensure services are aligned with, and complementary to, those within Careers Nova Scotia.
Children, Youth and Family Supports	Amendments to Children and Family Services Act	Completed	Amendments to the *Children and Family Services Act* were passed and received Royal Assent in December 2015. The amendments: close the gap in the protection of youth from 16 to 19 years of age; enable earlier intervention and support before children suffer serious harm; reduce obstacles that interfere

			with a child's placement in an adoptive home; decrease the duration of court proceedings; and improve secure treatment services for children and youth with complex emotional and/or behavioral issues.
	Continuum of supports and services for children, youth and families	Work in Progress	Invested $1.2 million in funding for Stronger Families Nova Scotia to offer early intervention and prevention programs. This included: the creation and implementation of 15 new Parenting Journey sites, three of which were tailored to meet the unique needs of African, Aboriginal & Acadian communities; and development of two intensive family preservation pilot programs called Families Plus (scheduled to open in 2016/17).
	Improving Outcomes for Youth-at-Risk	Work in Progress	As part of a multi-year initiative, the Department profiled Nova Scotia's youth at risk population from a social, familial, and economic context e.g. income, immigration, education, homelessness, family violence. With this information, the department can identify gaps in services and supports by comparing the at-risk youth population in Nova Scotia to programming that is currently available.
	Foster Parent Program	Work in Progress	In partnership with Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia, launched an on-call peer support program that can connect foster parents, via phone, from 10 am to 10pm daily. We launched a new marketing campaign targeting specific demographics.
	Sexual Violence Strategy (Year 2 of 3)	Completed	In June 2015 the Province released the Sexual Violence Strategy. In 2015-2016 $1.25 million was invested in Community Support Networks and $650,000 in Prevention and Innovation Grants. A public awareness campaign

			on sexual violence was developed, as were training and supports for communities to lead the way in helping those who experience sexual violence. Professional development was provided to phone line operators to ensure 24/7 support for victims.
Disability Support Program	Employment Framework for Persons with Disabilities	Work in Progress	The DSP Program consulted with service providers to develop a plan for increased community employment for persons with disabilities.
	Accessibility Legislation	Work in Progress	Ministers Advisory Panel (MAP) on Accessibility released in June 2015, with recommendations on what should be included in new accessibility legislation. The Department is planning to introduce the Province's first accessibility legislation in Fall 2016.
	Community Residential Support Plan Implementation	Work in Progress	The Department continued to implement the Community Residential Support Plan. In 2015-2016, 327 clients living in larger facilities were identified and assessed to determine support needs and develop plans for transition to the community.
Corporate Services	Departmental Outcomes Framework	Work in Progress	In 2015-2016, the Department continued the development of an Outcomes Management Framework (OMF). This defined departmental and program outcomes. Metrics for all three program areas were developed and reporting has begun on various measures.
	Public Awareness Strategy	Work in Progress	Worked to develop a strategic public awareness plan, with an emphasis on social media, as a way to reach DCS clients and the public. The aim is to raise the profile of DCS and our partners, highlighting the work done to provide for people in need.
	Modernized Agreement Management	Work in Progress	Continued to move forward with the planning and development of a formal process for establishing, monitoring

	Standards, Policies and Procedures		and administering funding agreements with external service providers and organizations who deliver programs on behalf of the Department. This will ensure clear and consistent policies, processes and tools for effective oversight of DCS funding to external service providers and organizations.

Financial Results

Department of Community Services (DCS) Estimated & Actual Expenditures For the Year Ending March 31, 2016 Operational Area	Estimate 2015-2016 ($thousands)	Actual 2015-2016 ($thousands)	Variance	Notes
Gross Departmental Expenses:				
Senior Management	1,707	1,541	-166	
Policy and Innovation	5,850	4,849	-1,001	1
Corporate Services Unit	2,962	4,394	1,432	2
Service Delivery	101,733	99,750	-1,983	3
Disability Support Program	304,654	319,191	14,537	4
Child, Youth and Family Support Program	85,185	94,228	9,043	5
Housing Services	51,238	49,291	-1,947	6
Employment Support and Income Assistance	353,004	340,045	-12,959	7
Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women	9,077	9,052	-25	
Total Departmental Expenses	915,410	922,341	6,931	
Fees and Other Charges	354	477	123	
Ordinary Recoveries	16,963	18,907	1,944	8
TCA Purchase Requirements	0	0	0	
Provincial Funded Staff (FTE's)	1,646	1,615	-31	9

Notes to the Estimated and Actual Expenditures for the Year Ending March 31, 2016:

1. Underspent due to staff vacancies and non-salary administrative costs.
2. Overspent due to the transfer in of regional Finance staff from other divisions as the result of changes to the departments' operating model.

3. Underspent due to the transfer out of staff to other divisions as the result of changes to the departments' operating model.
4. Overspent due primarily to increasing client care costs.
5. Overspent due primarily to increasing client costs in the Maintenance of Children program.
6. Underspent due to lower than budgeted expenditures in Affordable Housing programs and increased HST recoveries related to Housing Authority expenditures, resulting in a lower Provincial Grant to Housing Nova Scotia.
7. Underspent due primarily to declining caseloads in the Income Assistance Program, and lower than budgeted costs for Employment Support and the Nova Scotia Child Benefit programs.
8. Higher than budgeted recoveries are primarily due to an increase in CPP and Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP) recoveries for Income Assistance Program clients as well as higher Child Tax Benefit recoveries related to children in care.
9. Lower than budgeted FTE's as a result of temporary staff vacancies throughout the year.

Measuring Our Performance

This section provides detailed information on the Department of Community Services' progress against the outcomes and targets identified in the 2015-2016 Statement of Mandate.

In 2015-2016, the Department continued, as a key priority, the development of an Outcomes Management Framework (OMF). The outcomes framework is an evidence-based accountability tool that will improve the way the Department measures its performance. This framework will guide performance measurement of the Department for 2016-2017 onward, as reflected in the 2016-2017 Business Plan.

Outcome: Increased number of Nova Scotians living independent of income assistance

1. **Measure:** **Number and Percent of Nova Scotians Living in Poverty (LICO)**

This measure represents the number and percentage of Nova Scotians whose total household income falls below a defined low-income threshold. The Department uses the *Statistics Canada* after-tax low-income cut-off (After-Tax LICO) to track poverty in Nova Scotia. The Low Income Cut-off (LICO) data is from the new Canadian Income Survey (CIS), released by Statistics Canada in December 2014. The methodology used in the CIS survey is different from the methodologies of past surveys, so Statistics Canada warns against comparisons of 2012 LICO data with older LICO data.

Community Size/Family Size	Rural Area	Urban under 30,000	Urban 30,000-99,999	Urban 100,000-499,999	Urban
1 person	$13,188	$15,093	$16,836	$17,050	$20,160
2 persons	$16,051	$18,370	$20,493	$20,750	$24,536
3 persons	$19,987	$22,873	$25,517	$25,839	$30,553
4 persons	$24,934	$28,537	$31,835	$32,236	$38,117
5 persons	$28,394	$32,495	$36,495	$36,707	$43,404
Source: Statistics Canada, *Low income lines, 2013-2014* **Catalogue no. 75F0002M**					

What does this measure tell us?

Low income cut-offs (LICOs) are income thresholds below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income on the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family. A reduction in the number and percentage of people with incomes below the after-tax LICO is an indication that more people have the income to spend on their basic needs.

Where are we now?

In 2013, the last year for which data is available from Statistics Canada, 7.1% of the Nova Scotia population were at or below the poverty line (below the LICO, after tax), as compared to 8.4% in 2012. This shows an overall reduction in the proportion of Nova Scotians living under the poverty line as defined by LICO.

Number and Percentage of Nova Scotians Living in Low Income (below the after-tax LICO)

	2012	2013
All persons – number of persons in low income	77,000	65,000
All persons – percentage of persons in low income	8.4%	7.1%

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table no. 206-0041

Where do we want to be in the future?

The Department is modernizing the benefits, services and financial supports available under the ESIA programs to ensure they meet the needs of vulnerable Nova Scotians. The Department continues its work to ensure clients are able to meet their basic needs, and have control over their own lives and are attached to the labour market. The Department will continue to measure poverty through measuring total income supports, by segment and family composition, as a percentage of poverty lines. These will include LICO; Low Income Measure (LIM); and Market Basket Measure (MBM).

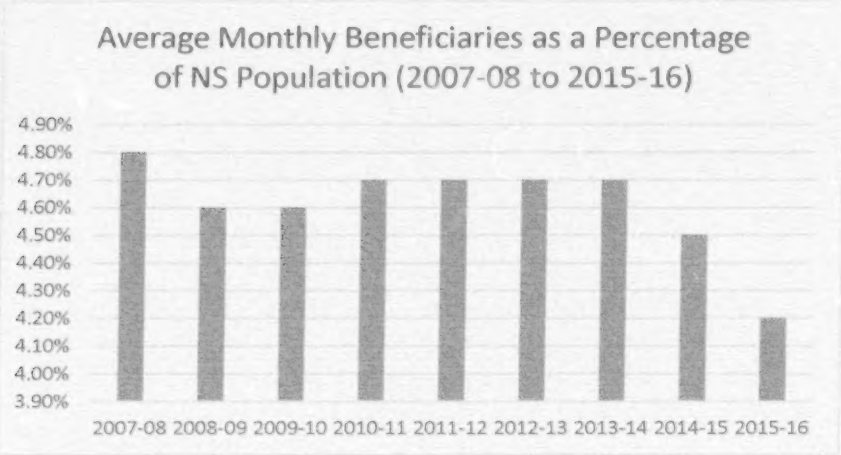
2. Measure: Average Monthly Beneficiaries as a Percentage of the Population

This measure represents the percentage of low income Nova Scotia households who are dependent, in whole or in part, on income assistance to meet their basic needs.

What does this measure tell us?

A reduction in the number of persons dependent on income assistance is an indication of better outcomes for low-income Nova Scotians. It represents more people who have moved to the work force or are making the transition into the workforce and greater self-sufficiency.

Where are we now?



The percentage of Nova Scotia's population dependent, in whole or in part, on income assistance to meet their basic needs fell from 4.5 percent in 2014-2015 to 4.2 percent in 2015-2016. The average monthly caseload fell from 28,100 in 2014-2015 to 26,793 in 2015-2016, a reduction of 1,307 cases. This decrease was achieved by assisting individuals and families with access to employment opportunities, early identification of other available sources of income and supports, and consistent review of eligibility and policy application.

Where do we want to be in the future?

DCS is working to ensure clients have control over their own lives and that our programs meet the needs of our clients. Through ESIA Transformation, efforts are ongoing to increase the number of clients living independently of ESIA, reduce the amount of time clients require supports and the number of instances in which they require supports.

3. Measure: Percentage of Income Assistance Recipients with Wage Income

Employment Support Services (ESS) helps eligible people on income assistance to become more self-sufficient. Involvement in employment activities such as volunteer or part-time work or career planning not only reduces reliance on income assistance but also enables individuals and families to achieve a greater degree of self-reliance and independence.

What does this measure tell us?

This measure indicates the percentage of income assistance recipients with wage income. This includes those who are still receiving income assistance at a reduced amount because their earned wages are not sufficient to completely exit the program.

Where are we now?

In 2015-2016, 12.1% of clients had wage income, up slightly from 11.8% in 2014-2015. This exceeds the target of 11.6% set in the 2015-2016 Statement of Mandate and demonstrates that more income assistance clients are working and earning wages.

Where do we want to be in the future?

Our goal is to increase the number of Nova Scotians living independently of income assistance. An effective way to do this is attachment to the labour market. The Department continues to work in partnership with Labour and Advanced Education (LAE) in an effort to reduce the duplication of services and make the most out of employment and training opportunities. As the Department implements the new Outcomes Management Framework, attachment to the labour market will be measured through the percent of clients with earnings from employment and the percent of clients with new earned income.

Outcome: To improve the educational, justice, health, social and economic determinants of children in care and children of income assistance recipients

1. Measure: Percent of Children in Permanent Care Placed for Adoption

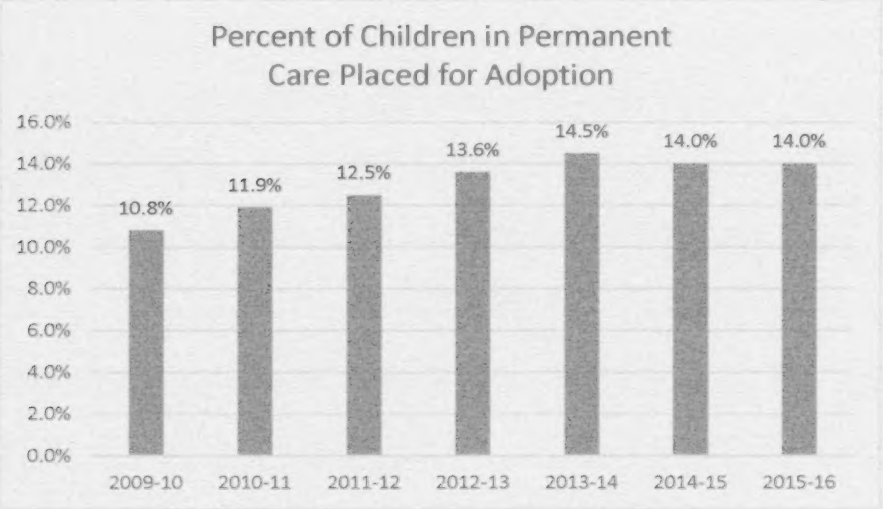
The Department is responsible for Nova Scotian children when they cannot be safely and securely cared for by their own families. Where a child is in the Department's permanent care and legally free for adoption, it is in the child's best interest to be placed for adoption.

What does this measure tell us?

This measure reports on the number of children in the Department's permanent care that are placed for adoption. The number includes adoptions that have not yet been finalized.

Where are we now?

The Department continued its work to ensure children and youth have stable placements and nurturing homes. In 2015-2016 the overall percentage of children in permanent care placed for adoption was 14%. This was consistent with 2014-2015 and above the Department's target of placing 13.6% of children in permanent care.



Where do we want to be in the future?

Assuring children have a stable family environment in which to grow and prosper continues to be a priority for the Department. Through the Departmental transformation initiatives, we are changing to provide better results for Nova Scotia's children, youth and families.

2. Measure: Number and percent of children living in poverty (LICO)

This measure represents the number and percentage of Nova Scotia children who live in households where the total household income falls below a defined low-income threshold. The Department uses the after-tax low-income cut-off to track child poverty in Nova Scotia.

What does this measure tell us?

A reduction in the number or percentage of children who live in households with incomes below the after-tax LICO is an indication that fewer children have to live without necessities such as nutritious food, proper shelter, and clothing.

Where are we now?

The latest Statistics Canada information indicates that the prevalence of children living in poverty decreased from 10.7% to 8.0%.

Number and Percentage of Nova Scotians Living in Low Income (below the after-tax LICO		
Children under 18 years – number of children in low income	18,000	13,000
Children under 18 years – percentage of children in low income	10.7%	8.0%
Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table no. 206-0041		

Where do we want to be in the future?

The Department is working to provide better results for Nova Scotia's children, youth and families, stronger communities and a more sustainable system. This includes the redesign of the CYFS continuum of supports and services for vulnerable children, youth, and families at risk of child abuse and neglect.

Outcome: Improve opportunity for social inclusion for persons with disabilities

1. Measure: People on the Waitlist for DSP Residential Supports

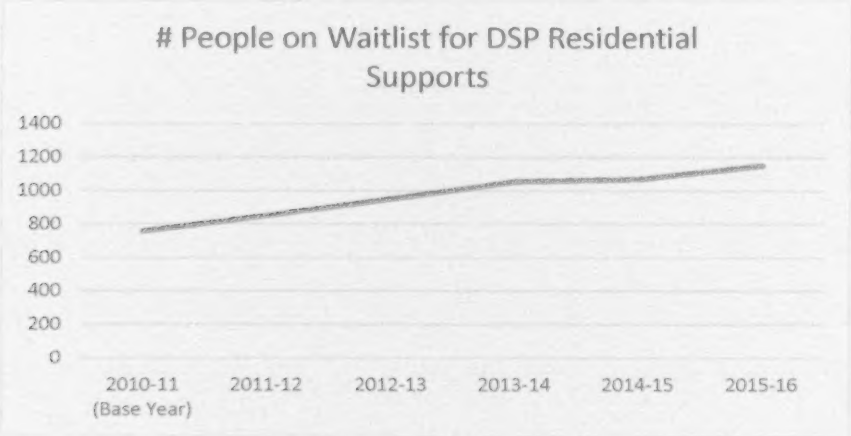
Timely access to appropriate residential supports can improve independence and social inclusion for persons with disabilities.

What does this measure tell us?

A reduction in the number of clients on the waitlist, including both individuals with no support and those receiving support through existing programs which are either not of their choosing or do not meet their current needs, is a signal of improved opportunities for independence and social inclusion.

Where are we now?

The number of DSP clients on the waitlist for residential supports has continued to increase. The waitlist has developed because there is higher demand for DSP programs than program availability. The number of clients increased from 1071 in 2014-2015 to 1151 in 2015-2016. Increased waitlists can be attributed to the changing needs of DSP clients and limited residential capacity.



Where do we want to be in the future?

The Disability Support Program is changing to become more person-directed, accessible and flexible. The Department is taking action to increase community living with social and economic inclusion; modernize services and programs based on choice, flexibility and person-directed planning; and closure of larger residential facilities over time. Critical to the success of a reduced waitlist is to plan and build community capacity supply that aligns with current and future trends, client choice and need.

2. Measure: Percent of DSP Clients supported in Community Based Options

Community based options enable persons with disabilities to remain in their own homes with family, or alternate home-like settings, and in their communities.

What does this measure tell us?

This measure calculates the percentage of DSP clients being supported in community based options.

Where are we now?

In 2015-2016, approximately 70 percent of clients in the Disability Support Program were supported in community based options. This is a one percent increase from the previous year which meets the target as set out in the 2015-2016 Statement of Mandate to increase the percent of DSP clients supported in community based options.

Where do we want to be in the future?

The DSP is changing to strengthen existing community-based programs. The goal is more flexible, sustainable and personal supports that give people a greater sense of belonging and involvement in their community. The Department has worked with clients to define community. It is defined as, 'where a person feels safe, valued for their contribution and able to pursue the life they choose'. This means that while the Department will continue to measure clients who are being supported in 'community-based options' (i.e. not a larger facility), measurement will also focus on the deeper 'community' definition and work towards the achievement of building and supporting a sense of community for all clients. The Department is committed to the closure of larger facilities (ARCs, RRCs and RCFs) and is designing a system that will support the transition of all clients into community-based settings.

Appendix A: Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

Annual Report under Section 18 of the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*

The *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011.

The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith.

The Act also protects employees who do disclose from reprisals, by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labour Board.

A Wrongdoing for the purposes of the *Act* is:

a) a contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations
b) a misuse or gross mismanagement of public funds or assets
c) an act or omission that creates an imminent risk of a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or the environment, or
d) directing or counselling someone to commit a wrongdoing

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the Department of Community Services.

Information Required under Section18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2015-2016
The number of disclosures received	1
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	Allegation that staff in a regional Child Welfare office were directed to use their personal devices (smart phone, home computer, etc.) for work purposes. The complainant was concerned about the risks to client privacy and thought this request was not in keeping with the requirements of the FOIPOP Act.
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	This matter is still under investigation. No findings of wrongdoing have yet been identified.